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INDONESIA

by swedish news agency TT

Offensive against guerillas on East Timor

The Indonesian army has launched an offensive across large tracts of East Timor to quel rebel forces before the general elections later this spring.

Detailed information about the offensive has just arrived from East Timor by secret messengers, says José Ramos Horta to TT in a phone call from Lisbon. Horta is the UN representative of the Eastern Timorian organization, Fretilin.

According to reports signed by the military leader of the Fretilin, Xanana Gusmao, 60 or so aircrafts and helicopters have been transported to East Timor and between 30 000 and 35 000 Indonesian troops are already there, says Horta.

The international Red Cross representative in Dili, the capital of East Timor, has been prevented from travelling to those areas that came under attack recently. That's where the situation is precarious for the civilian population with alleged shortages of food and medical care.

The offensive was mounted on a small scale last July, but it has now reached full force," says Xanana.

The East Timorian situation has found its way into Swedish politics. Former minister of foreign trade, Mr Mats Hellström, came under criticism for permitting arms to be exported to Indonesia while fighting was going on in East Timor.

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With the recent controversies about Sweden's arms exports, Hellström and Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson have stated that the fighting in East Timor has abated sharply or stopped completely.

Ramos Horta is extremely upset about these statements:

"It's strange that lies such as these can continue despite the fact that so much, reliable evidence has arrived about heavy fighting there. I think that the Swedish Ambassador in Djakarta is sending false information to Stockholm and the Swedish government," says José Ramos Horta.